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RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 0001
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0002
RUEHROV/AMEMBASSY VATICAN 0716

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DEPT. FOR EUR/WE LARREA, DRL/IRF HEWETT

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TAGS: [AF](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [PTER](#) [VT](#)

SUBJECT: HOLY SEE APPRECIATES PROGRESS IN AFGHANISTAN

CLASSIFIED BY: Peter G. Martin, POL/ECON CHIEF, VATICAN, STATE.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

Summary

1. (C) Holy See MFA Director for Afghanistan Murphy received with interest several fact sheets on reconstruction efforts in the country and encouraged us to keep up our efforts to publicize the positive strides that have been made. With few Catholics and no diplomatic representation in Afghanistan, the Holy See doesn't get much information from the ground, but maintains a keen interest. Post will continue to pass information as appropriate; with Pope Benedict often speaking out on issues related to the war on terror, it is important that the Holy See have a clear picture of the progress that has been made in Afghanistan. End Summary.

Interested in Strides

2. (C) Monsignor Joseph Murphy, Holy See MFA Director for Afghanistan, received with interest March 9 several fact sheets we passed him on reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. He said he didn't often see good news about such work in the media. He was particularly interested in information on the reconstruction of schools and educational opportunities for girls. Murphy encouraged us to keep up our efforts to get this information out there, acknowledging that it is a tough fight with current challenges in the country - and in today's media climate.

Lack of Information

¶3. (C) Murphy told us the Holy See didn't get much good information from Afghanistan and said he'd welcome whatever we could pass. The Holy See has no nuncio there, and has to rely on the nuncio in Pakistan for communication - not an ideal situation. Otherwise, there is an Italian priest attached to the Italian Embassy in Kabul (Fr. Moretto), who has some communication with the Holy See. He has been pressing the Vatican to upgrade its status in the country (there are several ranks corresponding to the size/activity of the Catholic population in a country), but there are no plans to do so yet. There are very few Afghan Catholics; the main presence there consists of the diplomatic community and aid workers. As far as clergy goes, besides Moretto there is an Indian Jesuit in the north, and some military chaplains - primarily French.

Comment: Keeping the Holy See Informed

¶4. (C) While the paucity of Catholics in Afghanistan limits the Holy See's activity in the country, it maintains an interest due to the country's strategic importance. Post will continue to pass information as appropriate, and would welcome any points the Department deems of particular interest to the Holy See. With Pope Benedict often speaking out on issues related to the war on terror, it is important that the Holy See have a clear picture of the strides that have been made in Afghanistan.

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